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I. SECURITY COUNCIL MEETS ON THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 10 April, with reference to letters received from Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, and the Palestine Observer Mission on 2 April (A/50/916-S/1996/233 and A/50/915-S/1996/235), the Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of April requested the Security Council to meet in an urgent formal session in order to consider the serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem (S/1996/257). The Council met on 15 April, without taking any action (S/PV.3652 and Resumption 1). In the course of the debate, the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Mr. Ravan Farhadi (Afghanistan), made a statement, excerpts from which follow:

I am grateful to you, Mr. President, and to the other members of the Security Council for having given me the opportunity, as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this important debate on the decision by the Israeli Government regarding the blockade and closure of Israeli borders with Palestinian territory. The resulting economic hardships and aggravation of tensions in this area is of great concern to our Committee. The closure has brought about restrictions on freedom of movement within the Palestinian territory. This action by the Government of Israel has made life extremely difficult for the people of the Palestinian territory. This situation may exacerbate difficulties in the relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli Government has also stated that it is its intention to take further implacable measures in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. These measures include the further destruction of houses, the confiscation of land, the expansion of settlements and some restrictions on the movement of persons and goods within the Palestinian territory, as well as into and out of the territory.

This Israeli policy has resulted in rapidly escalating hardships for the entire Palestinian population. Uncertain food supplies and massive unemployment have reached crisis levels. Patients and medical staff alike are unable to travel from one area of the West Bank to another to reach hospitals and clinics, even in emergency situations. Education, agriculture and business activity have been severely disrupted. International non-governmental-organization staff, including foreign nationals, have been prohibited from moving between population areas in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. At this time when the services of international non-governmental organizations are desperately needed, they are unable to provide even the most basic services.

It should also be stated that the closure of the border of the West Bank with Jordan and that of the Gaza Strip with Egypt, obstructing the movement of persons and goods, is effectively isolating the Palestinian territory from the neighbouring countries.

The Committee believes that these measures are in violation of the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which is applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, including Jerusalem, as well as of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

This policy of the Government of Israel totally contradicts the concept of peacemaking on the basis of the agreements that have been reached between the two parties thus far.

The Committee is also of the view that the response to acts of violence committed by some elements should not be directed at the Palestinian people as a whole. It should not undermine and hinder the peace process, the success of which the Committee has striven to ensure, in accordance with the General Assembly's resolutions.

II. COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS ADOPTS RESOLUTIONS RELATING TO PALESTINE QUESTION AND MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

On 11 April, at its fifty-second session, held at Geneva from 18 March to 26 April 1996, the Commission on Human Rights adopted five resolutions (see also the March issue of this Bulletin and document E/CN.4/1996/151 dated 9 April 1996). The full texts of the resolutions are given below.

1996/3. Question of the violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine

The Commission on Human Rights,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as by the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Guided also by the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Taking into consideration the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and the provisions of Additional Protocol I thereto, and the Hague Convention IV of 1907, as well as the principles of international law affirmed by the General Assembly in its resolutions 3 (I) of 13 February 1946, 95 (I) of 11 December 1946, 260 A (III) of 9 December 1948 and 2391 (XXIII) of 26 November 1968,

Recalling the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights related to the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem,

Recalling also the General Assembly resolutions on Israeli violations of human rights in occupied Palestine, since 1967 and until now,

Recalling further the provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993,

Taking note of the report (E/CN.4/1996/18) of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Hannu Halinen, regarding his mission undertaken in accordance with Commission resolution 1993/2 A of 19 February 1993,

Taking note also of the reports of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories submitted to the General Assembly since 1968, including the latest (A/50/463),

Noting with great concern the continued Israeli refusal to abide by the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights calling on Israel to put an end to the violations of human rights and affirming the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem,

Welcoming anew the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993 and of the following agreement, whereby violations of human rights will end through the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem,

Recalling all its previous resolutions on the subject, including the latest, resolution 1995/1 of 17 February 1995,

1. Deeply regrets the continued violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory since the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993, in particular the continuation of acts of killing and the detention of thousands of Palestinians without trial, the continuation of the extension and the

establishment of Israeli settlements, the confiscation of property of Palestinians and expropriation of their land, and calls upon Israel to cease these acts immediately;

2. Reaffirms that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, is applicable to the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, and considers any change in the geographic and demographic status of the city of Jerusalem from its situation prior to the June 1967 war to be illegal and void;

3. Calls upon Israel to cease immediately its policy of enforcing collective punishments, such as demolition of houses and closure of the Palestinian territory, a measure which threatens thousands of Palestinians with hunger and endangers their lives;

4. Calls once more upon Israel, the occupying Power, to desist from all forms of violation of human rights in the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories and to respect the bases of international law, the principles of international humanitarian law and its commitments to the provisions of the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations;

5. Also calls upon Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Commission on Human Rights;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of the Government of Israel and all other Governments, the competent United Nations organs, the specialized agencies, regional intergovernmental organizations and international humanitarian organizations, to disseminate it on the widest possible scale, and to report on its implementation by the Government of Israel to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session;

7. Also requests the Secretary-General to provide the Commission on Human Rights with all United Nations reports issued between sessions of the Commission that deal with the conditions in which the citizens of the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories are living under the Israeli occupation;

8. Decides to consider the question at its fifty-third session, as a matter of high priority.

Adopted by a vote of 27 in favour to 2 against, with 23 abstentions.

1996/4. Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories

The Commission on Human Rights,

Recalling that, in accordance with article 13, paragraph 2, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country,

Reaffirming that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, is applicable to Palestinian and all Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem,

Recalling its resolutions 1990/1 of 16 February 1990, 1991/3 of 15 February 1991, 1992/3 of 14 February 1992, 1993/3 of 19 February 1993, 1994/1 of 18 February 1994 and 1995/3 of 17 February 1995 in which, inter alia, it reaffirmed the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, and noting that Israel has not fully complied with the provisions of those resolutions,

Welcoming the positive development that originated with the International Peace Conference on the Middle East convened in Madrid on 30 October 1991, including in particular the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements signed in Washington by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993 as well as the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip signed in Washington by the same parties on 28 September 1995, followed by the partial redeployment of the Israeli army from the main Palestinian towns and the democratic election of the Palestinian Council and President of the Palestinian Authority,

Condemning in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism, and calling on the Parties not to allow them to affect the ongoing peace process negatively,

Noting with appreciation the report (E/CN.4/1996/18) submitted by the Special Rapporteur pursuant to resolution 1993/2 A of 19 February 1993, in which he recommends, inter alia, that the confiscation of Palestinian-owned land and the construction or expansion of settlements should be halted immediately,

Noting that the question of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories will be addressed during the negotiations on the final status of the territories, which will start not later than May 1996, and convinced in this regard that a complete cessation by Israel of its policy of expanding the settlements, which may change the physical character and demographic composition of the occupied territories, would greatly facilitate those negotiations,

1. Reaffirms that the installation of Israeli civilians in the occupied territories is illegal and constitutes a violation of the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949;

2. Reiterates its request to the Government of Israel to comply fully with the provisions of Commission resolutions 1990/1, 1991/3, 1992/3, 1993/3, 1994/1 and 1995/3;

3. Urges the Government of Israel to abstain from installing any settlers in the occupied territories and to prevent any new installation of settlers in these territories.

Adopted by a vote of 49 in favour to 1 against, with 3 abstentions.

1996/2 Human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan

The Commission on Human Rights,

Deeply concerned at the suffering of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan due to the violation of their human rights since the Israeli military occupation of 1967,

Recalling Security Council resolution 497 (1981) of 17 December 1981,

Recalling also all relevant General Assembly resolutions, including the latest, resolution 50/29 D of 6 December 1995, in which the Assembly, inter alia, called upon Israel to put an end to its occupation of the Arab territories,

Reaffirming once more the illegality of Israel's decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan, which has resulted in the effective annexation of that territory,

Reaffirming that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible under the principles of international law and under the Charter of the United Nations,

Taking note with deep concern of the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/50/463) and, in this connection, regretting Israel's constant refusal to cooperate with and to receive the Special Committee,

Guided by the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with particular reference to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and the relevant provisions of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907,

Reaffirming the importance of the peace process which started in Madrid on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 and 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973 which aims at the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East,

Reaffirming its previous relevant resolutions, the most recent being resolution 1995/2 of 17 February 1995,

1. Calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, particularly resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council, inter alia, decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian

Golan was null and void and without international legal effect, and demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, should rescind forthwith its decision,

2. Also calls upon Israel to desist from changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan, and emphasizes that the displaced persons of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan must be allowed to return to their homes and to recover their properties;

3. Further calls upon Israel to desist from imposing Israeli citizenship and Israeli identity cards on the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan and to desist from its repressive measures against them, and from all other practices mentioned in the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories;

4. Determines that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, that purport to alter the character and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan are null and void, constitute a flagrant violation of international law and of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and have no legal effect;

5. Calls once again upon Member States not to recognize any of the legislative or administrative measures and actions referred to in the present resolution;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Governments, the competent United Nations organs, the specialized agencies, regional inter-governmental organizations and international humanitarian organizations and to give it the widest possible publicity, and to report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session;

7. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-third session, as a matter of high priority, the item entitled "Question of the violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine".

Adopted by a vote of 22 in favour to 1 against, with 29 abstentions.

1996/5. Situation in occupied Palestine

The Commission on Human Rights,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the provisions of Articles 1 and 55 thereof, which affirm the right of peoples to self-determination, and scrupulous respect of the principle of refraining in international relations from the threat or use of force, as specified in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970,

Guided also by the provisions of article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which affirm that all peoples have the right to self-determination,

Taking into consideration the provisions of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960,

Guided by the provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, and in particular Part I, paragraphs 2 and 3, relating to the right to self-determination of all peoples and especially those subject to foreign occupation,

Recalling Security Council resolutions 183 (1963) of 11 December 1963 and 218 (1965) of 23 November 1965, which affirmed the interpretation of the principle of self-determination as laid down in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV),

Recalling also General Assembly resolutions 181 A and B (II) of 29 November 1947 and 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, as well as all other resolutions which confirm and define the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their right to self-determination without external interference and to the establishment of their independent State on their national soil, especially Assembly resolutions ES-7/2 of 29 July 1980 and 37/86 E of 20 December 1982,

Reaffirming its previous resolutions in this regard, including the latest, resolution 1995/4 of 17 February 1995,

Bearing in mind the reports and recommendations of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People which, from 1967 to 1995, have been submitted to the Security Council through the General Assembly,

Reaffirming the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant United Nations resolutions and declarations, and the provisions of international covenants and instruments relating to the right to self-determination as an international principle and as a right of all peoples in the world,

Recalling that the foreign occupation by the armed forces of a State of the territory of another State constitutes an obstacle to and a grave violation of human rights according to Part I, paragraph 30, of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and an act of aggression and a crime against the peace and security of mankind, according to General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX) of 14 December 1974,

Welcoming the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in Washington on 13 September 1993, aimed at enabling the Palestinian people to achieve their national rights and, principally, their right to self-determination free of external intervention,

1. Reaffirms the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination without external interference;

2. Calls upon Israel to comply with its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, and to withdraw from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the other Arab territories which it has occupied since 1967 by military force, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, so as to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their universally recognized right to self-determination;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to transmit the present resolution to the Government of Israel and all other Governments, to distribute it on the widest possible scale and to make available to the Commission on Human Rights, prior to the convening of its fifty-third session, all information pertaining to the implementation of the present resolution by the Government of Israel;

4. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-third session the item entitled "The right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation" and to consider the situation in occupied Palestine under that item, as a matter of high priority.

Adopted by a vote of 28 in favour to 1 against, with 23 abstentions.

1996/7. Middle East peace process

The Commission on Human Rights,

Recalling its resolutions 1994/4 of 18 February 1994 and 1995/6 of 17 February 1995, General Assembly resolutions 49/88 of 16 December 1994 and 50/21 of 12 December 1995, and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1994/29 of 27 July 1994 and 1995/52 of 28 July 1995,

Recalling also the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights,

Stressing that the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict will constitute a significant contribution to strengthening international peace and security, and is a critical condition for the furthering of human rights in the region,

Recalling the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in Madrid on 30 October 1991, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 and 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, and the subsequent bilateral negotiations, as well as the meetings of the multilateral working groups, and noting with satisfaction the broad international support for the peace process,

Noting the continuing positive participation of the United Nations as a full extraregional participant in the work of the multilateral working groups,

Bearing in mind the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in Washington on 13 September 1993, the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in Cairo on 4 May 1994, and the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in Washington on 28 September 1995,

Also bearing in mind the Agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda, signed in Washington on 14 September 1993, the Agreement on the Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 29 August 1994, and the Jordan-Israel Treaty of Peace of 26 October 1994,

Recalling the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism annexed to General Assembly resolution 49/60, in which the Assembly declared that acts, methods and practices of terrorism constituted a grave violation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, and might pose a threat to international peace and security, jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder international cooperation and aim at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic bodies of society,

1. Stresses the importance of, and the need for, achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East;

2. Emphasizes that the achievement of such a peace is vital to the full implementation of human rights in the area;

3. Welcomes the peace process started in Madrid and supports the subsequent bilateral negotiations;

4. Also welcomes the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and its positive efforts to develop sound governance based on the will of the Palestinian people and democratic procedures;

5. Further welcomes the elections for the Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority held on 20 January 1996 which provide a democratic basis for the establishment of Palestinian institutions;

6. Supports the Declaration adopted at the Summit of Peacemakers held at Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, on 13 March 1996, which had as its objectives enhancing the peace process, promoting security and combating terrorism, and condemns terrorist attacks in the Middle East which seek to undermine the peace process and which have caused loss of life and injuries;

7. Calls upon the Centre for Human Rights to make available, on request, its programme of advisory services and technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and invites Governments to contribute to the programme;

8. Expresses its full support for the achievements of the peace process thus far, in particular the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed on 13 September 1993 by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, the subsequent Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed on 4 May 1994 by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, their 29 August 1994 Agreement on the Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 28 September 1995, the Agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda of 14 September 1993, the Washington Declaration, signed by Jordan and Israel on 25 July 1994, and the Jordan-Israel Treaty of Peace of 26 October 1994, which constitute important steps in achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and urges all parties to implement the agreements reached;

9. Encourages the continuation of negotiations on the implementation of the next stage of the Declaration of Principles.

Adopted without a vote

III. EXCERPTS FROM PRESS COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED BY THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

The Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, at its fifty-eighth session, held at Riyadh on 16 and 17 March 1996 under the chairmanship of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, issued a press communiqué (contained in document A/51/119-S/1996/305), excerpts from which follow.

The Ministerial Council discussed developments in the Middle East peace process. Based on the consistent positions of the States members of the Council in support of the peace process in the Middle East and with a view to arriving at a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region founded on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace, the Council expressed its great appreciation of the international efforts made in that direction, especially those made by the United States of America in encouraging the parties concerned to make the desired progress on a bilateral basis.

The Council, in expressing its satisfaction at the holding of Palestinian legislative and presidential elections and the completion by the Israeli army of its redeployment away from most of the cities and villages of the West Bank in keeping with the second phase of the Palestinian Self-Government Arrangements, appeals to Israel to end the blockade imposed on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, to implement the letter and the spirit of the bilateral agreements with the Palestinian side, to refrain from any practices incompatible with the trend towards peace in the region, and to begin the final-phase negotiations on a basis of total Israeli withdrawal from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, so as to enable the Palestinian people to exercise all its lawful rights, including that of establishing an independent State on its native soil.

The Council also expresses the hope that efforts will be redoubled, especially those of the United States of America, to surmount the obstacles that stand in the way of Syrian-Israeli negotiations, and affirms its full support for the Syrian position calling for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Arab Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. The Council also expresses its hope that progress will be achieved in Lebanese-Israeli relations, leading to the end of the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The Council expressed its profound appreciation of the efforts made by the Arab Republic of Egypt, headed by President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, to ensure the success of the Sharm al-Sheikh Summit for Peacemakers, and highlighted the significance of its positive outcome. It also renewed its full support for those efforts, appealing to all peace-loving States for constructive cooperation with a view to the formulation and implementation of effective practical measures which would help to promote and strengthen the Middle East peace process, safeguard its achievements and accomplishments and thwart any attempts to undermine them or prejudice the security and stability of the region and its future economic development.

The Council called upon the sponsors of the Summit to resume the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East with the aim of assessing the outcome of the peace process and of imparting to that process a powerful impetus that would help it to achieve its desired aims.

The Ministerial Council affirms the fact that extremism, violence and terrorism are global phenomena that are not restricted to a particular people or region. It renews its loathing and condemnation of such phenomena and its categorical rejection of all forms of violence and terrorism, particularly those which are detrimental to security and stability in the region or which impede the peace process in the Middle East, and calls upon the international community to coordinate its efforts to stop acts of violence and terrorism, ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are brought to justice, and prevent extremist and terrorist elements from using the territory of any State for purposes of obtaining funding or arms supplies and from availing themselves of the media to incite acts of violence and terrorism.

IV. DECLARATION BY THE PRESIDENCY ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE DECISION ADOPTED BY THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE PALESTINIAN CHARTER

The Presidency of the European Union issued a declaration on the decision adopted on 24 April 1996 by the Palestine National Council on the Palestinian Charter. The declaration [contained in document A/50/946-S/1996/322] reads as follows:

The European Union congratulates President Arafat and the Palestine National Council on their decision of 24 April 1996, taken by an overwhelming majority, to amend the Palestinian Charter so that it will no longer deny the right of the State of Israel to exist.

The European Union wishes to underline its continuing commitment to the cause of peace and democracy, courageously undertaken by the Palestinian people and its leadership. The decision to amend the Charter, which constitutes a confirmation of the strong Palestinian desire to fulfil its undertakings, shows how widespread the support for peace is among the Palestinians, and how limited the following of those who are opposed to it through violent means and terrorist actions.

In this respect, the European Union is confident that the Government of Israel will respond to this gesture of the Palestinians by:

- implementing all the agreements, including the withdrawal from Hebron;

- continuing the peace talks which are expected to resume on 7 May;

- ending the closure which has been imposed on the West Bank and Gaza since the beginning of March.

Rome, 26 April 1996.

V. JOB CREATION IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA SUPPORTED BY $20 MILLION FROM THE WORLD BANK

On 25 April 1996, the World Bank issued a press release (WB/96/22/MENA), excerpts from which follow:

Washington, 25 April 1996. The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors today approved a $20million credit drawn from the Trust Fund for Gaza and the West Bank for a second Emergency Rehabilitation Project to help alleviate the economic crisis in Gaza and the West Bank resulting from the deterioration in the security situation and the closure of the Palestinian territories.

The credit funds a total of 40 sub-projects, 33 of which will rehabilitate and improve village access and municipal roads (27 in the West Bank and six in the Gaza Strip). The remaining seven will rehabilitate and extend water supply and wastewater disposal facilities in the Gaza Strip.

This Bank-financed project is expected to create upwards of 225,000 person-days of jobs over the next eight to 10 months, of which at least 77,000 would materialize in the May-July period. Bidding for about half of the sub-projects could begin in late April, with implementation starting in May 1996.

'It is clear that the immediate issue is to give employment to those whose livelihood is interrupted by the closures,' World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn said. 'The swift design and approval of this West Bank and Gaza emergency credit to create jobs is a good example of the World Bank's effort to speed up its processes, especially in the area of post-conflict situations,' Mr. Wolfensohn added.

World Bank staff, working with the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), prepared this project over a two-week period by identifying priority sub-projects from a wider set of three planned, but as yet unfunded, investments.

Although more than 50,000 Palestinian workers were legally employed in Israel before the latest closures, unemployment and underemployment were at a record high of 51 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 33 per cent in the West Bank. Unemployment is believed to have soared to perhaps two thirds of the workforce in recent weeks. The proposed credit from the Trust Fund will be on International Development Association (IDA) terms, with 40 years' maturity, including a 10-year grace period and no interest.

VI. UNESCO LAUNCHES PROJECT TO RENOVATE BETHLEHEM

On 18 April 1996, UNESCO issued the following press release (OPI/NYO/94-4E).

Paris, 18 April. To commemorate the approaching 2000th anniversary of the Nativity in Bethlehem, UNESCO, the Palestinian Authority and the Municipality of Bethlehem will unveil a major project this Sunday to restore this historic city of universal significance.

Known as Bethlehem 2000, the $2.26 million four-year project seeks to renovate the old city, restore its religious and historical monuments and highlight its contributions to civilization. The opening at 3 p.m. 21 April of a photographic exhibit of this city's churches, 18th century homes and dilapidated market place at the University of Bethlehem will inaugurate this project. In addition, UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor will issue an appeal to the international community to back the project marking the debut of the organization's promotional action for the rehabilitation and conservation of Bethlehem.

"As a pilot project, Bethlehem 2000 is also a chance to highlight, through an urban policy, some of the issues of culture, tourism and the economy which mark the rebirth of a society, and thereby place a new milestone on the road to a culture of peace in the Middle East," Mr. Mayor says in the foreword to the exhibit's catalogue.

This ancient city is not only the cradle of Christianity. Its vestiges date back to the Bronze Age. Rachel, Jacob's wife, is buried here. David, the King of Israel, was born here in the 10th century B.C. Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Crusaders and Ottomans have swept through its narrow stone streets.

Today, Bethlehem, 10 kilometres south of Jerusalem, is an over-built town of about 35,000 inhabitants, mostly Palestinian Christians. It is the victim of urban sprawl, pollution and the destructive effects of time and poverty. Telegraph poles, barbed wire and billboards disfigure the landscape. Tourist buses clog Manger Square.

Bethlehem 2000 plans to renovate the old town centre to attract tourists and create jobs. The establishment of a workshop for the conservation and development of cultural heritage is another priority for Bethlehem's renaissance.

At UNESCO-sponsored workshops, students from Al Najah and Bir Zeit Universities and the Paris-Belleville School of Architecture have outlined the old town's limits and identified five preliminary projects: redesigning the Square of the Nativity, restoring the central market, and building a new bus station, car park and low-cost housing. Their drawings, photographs and surveys will also be displayed at the exhibit.

The roving exhibit is a compendium of 80 photographs of Bethlehem's brightest treasures and bleakest corners. It is part of UNESCO's action to raise public awareness and financial support for Bethlehem 2000. After Bethlehem, the exhibit will travel to Haifa, Cairo, Athens, Rome, Tunis, Warsaw and other cities.

Bethlehem 2000 is one of 27 projects of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, established jointly by UNESCO and the Palestinian

Authority last year. Valued at $37 million, these projects emphasize five objectives: the development of Palestinian institutions in UNESCO's fields of competence; utilization of human resources; job creation; consolidation of the Middle East peace process; and the building of a modern society in former occupied territories.

VII. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION

1. Physicians for Human Rights, in a newsletter published in February 1996 (Volume 1, No. 1), has articles on freedom of movement during closure, entrance into Israel, passage between the self-rule areas, movement of patients and medical personnel denied entry permits on "security grounds". Copies are available from P.O. Box 10235, Tel Aviv, 611011, Israel (Fax No. (972-3) 566 2527).

2. Al-Haq, an affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists, has issued a press release concerning the deteriorating human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Copies are available from P.O. Box 1413, Ramallah, West Bank (Fax No. (972-2) 995 194).

3. Palestinian Center for Human Rights, in its weekly closure updates Nos. 3 to 7, dated 18 March to 18 April 1996, documents the effects of the ongoing closure imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip. Copies are available from P.O. Box 1204, Gaza (Fax No. (972-7) 824 776, 825 893).

4. Birzeit Human Rights Record, in a report on human rights at Birzeit University, No. 16 (August 1995-March 1996), has an article on how the Israeli siege paralyses the University. Copies are available from P.O. Box 14, Birzeit (Fax No. (972-2) 995 656).

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